

Message Text

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R 290847Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8864
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4972

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR SY UR LE
SUBJ: REPORTS OF SOVIET PRESSURE ON SARG TO WITHDRAW FORCES
FROM LEBANON

1. EMBOFF MET WITH SPOKESMAN OF COMMUNIST PARTY OF SYRIA (CPS), MURAD QUWATLI, FOR DISCUSSION OF LEBANESE CRISIS. QUWATLI, WHO IS NEW SOURCE, EVENCED SUSPICION ABOUT U.S. MOTIVES IN LEBANON. HE ASSERTED THAT U.S. DIPLOMATIC INACTIVITY IN LEBANON MADE IT APPEAR THAT U.S. REALLY INTERESTED IN CONTINUATION OF FIGHTING. RATHER, U.S. SHOULD BE PROMOTING CEASEFIRE AND HELPING NURTURE POLITICAL DIALOGUE AMONG ALL PARTIES TO CONFLICT. ASKED WHETHER HIS SUGGESTIONS WOULD BE IN ACCORD WITH SOVIET AIMS, QUWATLI REPLIED THAT SOVIETS WISHED FOR END TO FIGHTING AND RESUMPTION OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE. HE STATED SOVIETS HAD MADE THEIR POSITION CLEAR TO SARG: SYRIA MUST MAKE RECONCILIATION WITH PALESTINIANS AND MUST WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS FROM LEBANON. HE DENIED THAT SOVIET UNION WAS PUTTING PRESSURE ON ASAD REGIME, BUT REITERATED THAT IT WAS MAKING ITS POSITION KNOWN.

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2. ANOTHER EMBOFF TALKED WITH LOW-RANKING MILITARY OFFICER WHOSE REMARKS DIFFERED WITH QUWATLI'S ASSERTION THAT SOVIETS REFRAINING FROM APPLYING PRESSURE ON SARG. OFFICER SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT ABOUT FOUR WEEKS AGO SOVIETS HAD THREATENED TO WITHDRAW THEIR TECHNICIANS AND MILITARY ADVISORS PLUS CUT OFF WEAPONS SUPPLIES UNLESS SYRIA PULLED ITS MILITARY FORCES OUT OF LEBANON. EMBOFF ON SEPARATE OCCASION TALKED WITH CIVILIAN WHO SUPPLIED IDENTICAL INFORMATION, AND SOURCED IT TO CONVERSATION WITH SYRIAN GENERAL.

3. COMMENT: QUWATLI'S DENIAL THAT SOVIETS HAVE PRESSURED SARG TO ACCOMMODATE ITSELF TO SOVIET AIMS SEEMS DIS-INGENUOUS, SINCE MOSCOW'S READINESS TO MAKE KNOWN TO SARG ITS DISAGREEMENT WITH SYRIAN ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON IN ITSELF CONSTITUTES FORM OF PRESSURE. WE CANNOT CONFIRM ASSERTIONS PARA TWO THAT SOVIETS THREATENED NEARLY MONTH AGO TO APPLY LEVERAGE AFFORDED BY MILITARY TRAINING/SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH DAMASCUS. SUCH ASSERTIONS DO, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT MANY SYRIAN OFFICERS THEMSELVES ARE CONVINCED MOSCOW IS SERIOUSLY TRYING TO MODIFY SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON.
PELLETREAU

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